

ABOUT VISUAL ARTISTS



"In the Shadow of the Sixth" by R. Tom Gilleon

R. Tom Gilleon: "Let Icons Be Icons"
Through Dec. 28 at the C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls
Artist's website: www.timberlinestudios.com

The first one-man museum retrospective of R. Tom Gilleon to be held in the western United States displays 40 of the artist's signature works from private collections, including Gilleon's well-known tipi motifs and his massive nine-panel grid paintings.

The exhibition will also highlight a collection of what the artist calls his "B.S." art – witty illustrations built on clever visual puns.

As a major leading figure in contemporary western art, Gilleon has an extensive artistic background. Born in Florida, he worked for NASA as an illustrator and for the Walt Disney Company as a designer, where he created designs for many Disney theme parks worldwide. While attending a painting workshop in Montana in the early 1980s, Gilleon and his wife, artist Laurie A. Stevens, fell in love with the state and have since called Montana home.

Sarah Burt, the Russell Museum's chief curator, explains that "although art museums tend to be cautious about singling out living artists for solo exhibitions, Gilleon's body of work, the regard he commands and his provocative reinterpretation of western imagery make his formal recognition at the Russell Museum well deserved and appropriate."

"A Gilleon painting commands a room. There is an energy that gets projected, like the sun in the sky," said Mark Tarrant, owner of Altamira Fine Art, in Jackson, WY, which is a partner with the Russell in organizing the show.

"His artwork creates the spirit of enchantment of the American West more powerfully and compellingly than most of what we see in traditional western art," adds Tarrant.

An illustrated catalogue, *Let Icons Be Icons: The Art of R. Tom Gilleon*, accompanies the exhibition.

Henry Freedman: "Imagining New Worlds"
Through Sept. 21 at the Montana Museum of Art and Culture in The University of Montana PAR/TV Center in Missoula

In "Imagining New Worlds," Missoula artist Henry Freedman shares his innovative collages and constructions. Freedman's art, like that of assemblage pioneers Joseph Cornell and Kurt Schwitters, combines "the formal austerity of constructivism with the lively fantasy of surrealism."

Freedman takes advantage of the spontaneity of collage as an art form, relying on the surrealist technique of irrational juxtaposition. Collage is sometimes referred to as "the poetry of the commonplace," and Freedman's art incorporates common and not-so-common objects, including toys, letters, photographs, fine art prints and books.

The works, writes artist Craig Stockwell, are "beautifully made ... of a multitude of old materials: wood, glass, paper and photo images, etc. and ... put together with confidence and grace. There is both an apparent fragility and actual solidity in each object."

Freedman is professor emeritus of art history from Keene State College in New Hampshire, where he taught for 37 years and was credited with bringing "a dry field alive for students."

His artwork references a vast knowledge of art history, his passion as a collector and a love of travel. He discusses his work during a lecture at 7 p.m. Sept. 10 in the Masquer Theater and gives a gallery tour at noon Sept. 14.

Roger Rink: Montana Landscape Artist
Through Sept. 28 at Jest Gallery in Whitefish

Roger Rink, a native of East Glacier, says his work is "deeply rooted in place."

"Glacier Park and the Eastern Front of the Rocky Mountains, where the prairie meets the mountains, are constantly changing and eternally unchanged places. Living and working in a landscape defined both by transformation and permanence makes the project of painterly representation a uniquely spiritual endeavor for me."

Rink, who was a star basketball player for the Browning Indians in high school, graduated from the art program at The University of Montana and worked construction jobs while continuing to paint "the material of the world – its light and dark and life and death."

"I paint, sketch, write, and think outdoors, and I bring my impressions and material back to the studio I built, where I continue to work to open the canvas through further study and refinement of surface, tone, affect, and shape.

Among his influences, Rink lists the plein-air tradition, abstract expressionism, the landscapes of John Henry Twachtman and Issac Levitan, Robert Motherwell's "multi-form" paintings, and "the ecstatic and sensual line" of Amedeo Modigliani.

"There is no contemporary category or genre that can quite capture Rink's work, although something like 'Lyrical Expressionism' in landscape painting may be a place to begin to understand the uniquely spiritual nature of the works with their bold brushwork, ecstatic line, and freely brushed color," writes Katie Kane, an author and associate professor of English at The University of Montana.



"Field of Camas" by Roger Rink

Louise Barker: "Organic Works in Silk"
Sept. 1-30 at 4 Ravens Gallery in Missoula with a reception from 5-8 p.m. Sept. 6

Artist's website: www.louisebarker.com

Kalispell fiber and jewelry artist Louise Barker says she has always been drawn to the creative process.

"Growing up on a small mid-western farm taught me resourcefulness. My father was fearless in using materials immediately at hand to repair, upgrade and beautify our lives," she writes in her artist statement. "His creative problem-solving skills showed me how to rethink the materials around me in a new way."

Barker has been involved with fabric art and surface design for more than 30 years, and shown her work in exhibitions throughout Montana and in Jackson Hole, WY, Portland, OR, and Minot, ND.

"I love seeing the unexpected results that happen when you cannot have complete control over a substance or process. Color and texture take on a whole new meaning in this evolution."

Her current work uses metal to initially stain fabric, which is then painted with dyes and embellished further with paints, foil, paper and other materials. She applies a cold wax medium to the finished piece to protect the surface and add depth.

"When I create, I try to allow my materials to speak for themselves," she writes. "My sense of design is tactile, organic. My goal is to marry a balance of sophistication with nature."

Montana "spoke to me when I was only 19," and remains an inspiration, says the artist. "I never tire of the way the alpenglow briefly casts its spectacular robe of pinks and purples across the mountain tops."



"Leaves" by Louise Barker



"Postcard From Berlin" by Henry Freedman

Iris Dodge: "Montana Cowboys: Portrait Paintings"

Sept. 6-Nov. 2 at the Western Heritage Center in Billings, with a reception during the Art Walk, 5-8 p.m. Oct. 4

Artist's website: www.irisdodge.com

This exhibit features 50 new oil paintings of local cowboys by Iris Dodge, a realistic painter who specializes in oil and pastel portraits. She has been interviewing and painting portraits of cowboys for several years, and weaves original poetry and the story of each cowboy into the exhibit narrative.

"It is my goal, as an artist, to capture the emotion I feel at that moment, on canvas – whether it be a sunset, a mischievous twinkle in a child's eye, or the awareness of an animal," writes the artist.

Dodge was born in White Sulphur Springs and raised in rural Montana. She now makes her home in historic Nevada City.

She won the Valley Art Center's prestigious Grumbacher Award in Washington State, and her works were exhibited in the Strokes of Genius Show in Scottsdale, AZ, and the Western Regional Art Exhibition in Portland, OR.

Her paintings were also featured in the 2011 *Best of America Oil Artists* book from Kennedy Publishing, and have been reproduced in *Art of the West* and *Wildlife Art* magazines.

"I like to paint loose with the illusion of detail," says the artist, who is an avid outdoorswoman, and enjoys playing ragtime piano.

About Visual Artists compiled by Kristi Niemeyer



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Send your submissions for About Visual Arts

With About Visual Arts, *State of the Arts* continues to profile living Montana artists (no students, please), whose work is the focus of a current exhibit (on display during some portion of the two months covered by the current issue of *State of the Arts*).

Submissions must include:

- A digital image of the artist's work, with title of the piece;
- A brief bio and description of the artist's work (up to 300 words);
- Dates and title of exhibit; and
- The gallery or museum name, town and phone number.

MAC will select submissions that reflect a cross-section of gender, geography, styles and ethnicity, and are from a mix of public and private galleries and museums.

Deadline for submissions for the November/December issue is Oct. 1. Please send submissions to writesus@livelytimes.com with About Visual Arts in the subject line.



Portrait of Larry Carle by Iris Dodge